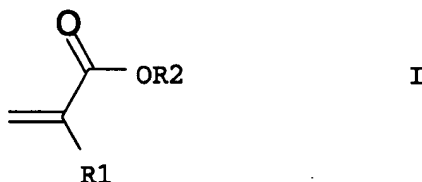


IN THE CLAIMS

Kindly amend the claims as shown on the attached sheets.

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1. (original) A thixotropic agent comprising as components from 0.1 to 30% by weight of at least one ethylene terpolymer wax synthesized from
- from 80 to 99.9% by weight of ethylene, from 0.1 to 20% by weight of at least two comonomers comprising
- as first comonomer from 1 to 99% by weight of at least one C_3 - C_{12} alkenecarboxylic acid and
- as second comonomer from 99 to 1% by weight of at least one ester of the formula I



where R^1 is selected from hydrogen, C_1 - C_{10} alkyl, C_3 - C_{12} cycloalkyl, and C_6 - C_{14} aryl

and R^2 is selected from C_1 - C_{10} alkyl, C_3 - C_{12} cycloalkyl, and C_6 - C_{14} aryl,

from 5 to 70% by weight of at least one first solvent incompatible with the ethylene terpolymer wax, and

from 5 to 85% by weight of at least one solvent compatible with the ethylene terpolymer

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wax and with said first solvent(s).

2. (original) A thixotropic agent as claimed in claim 1, wherein said first comonomer is acrylic acid.
3. (currently amended) A thixotropic agent as claimed in claim 1 ~~either of claims 1 and 2~~, wherein R^1 is hydrogen or methyl and R^2 is methyl in formula I.
4. (currently amended) A thixotropic agent as claimed in claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~, wherein the ethylene copolymer wax is synthesized from 90 to 99% by weight of ethylene and from 10 to 1% by weight of at least two comonomers comprising from 30 to 70% by weight of at least one C_3 - C_{12} alkenecarboxylic acid as first comonomer and from 70 to 30% by weight of at least one ester of the formula I as second comonomer.
5. (currently amended) A process for preparing a thixotropic agent as claimed in claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 4~~, which comprises first dissolving the ethylene terpolymer wax in one or more solvents compatible with the ethylene terpolymer wax and then adding at least one solvent incompatible with the ethylene terpolymer wax.
6. (currently amended) A coating material comprising at least one thixotropic agent as claimed in claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 5~~.
7. (currently amended) A metallic paint comprising at least one thixotropic agent as

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claimed in claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 5~~.

8. (currently amended) A process for preparing a coating material or metallic paint by mixing in a thixotropic agent as claimed in claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 5~~.
9. (currently amended) A surface coated with a coating material or metallic paint comprising at least one thixotropic agent as claimed in claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 5~~.